

Aotearoa

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PIRATES *of the* **PACIFIC**

The New Colonialists

Countdown Lockout

Climate Change

Aids

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Editorial: Pirates of the Pacific



As this editorial goes to print, warships are waiting off the coast of the Fiji Islands. Right now they are flying a friendly flag - they say they are there to help Australian civilians - but at the first sign of weakness these pirates will swoop and plunder yet another island nation. The warships are Australian, under the command of 'Bloody Jack' Howard, who with his first mate Helen 'Hellfire' Clark has kept the Pacific and its peoples under the thumb for many years.

Are we crazy? Surely Helen Clark and John Howard are more like the mum and dad of a happy, laughing Pacific family. Or, to be more serious, doesn't Australia and New Zealand provide essential aid, emergency help, employment opportunities, and guarantee peace and stability?

The short answer is no. While Pacific nations usually only feature in our media in times of disaster, or more recently, political unrest, they are locked into a dependency on Australia and New Zealand. While most people think of the South Pacific as a scattering of insignificant atolls, the whole region (including Melanesia) has around 8 million people - a crucial

market for Australian and NZ businesses. The aid that the NZ and Australian states provide is paltry next to the profits that 'our' exporters make in the Pacific.

The forestry and fishing resources of the islands are also significant - although foreign multinationals are chewing threw these at such a rate that the major forests in the Solomons and Papua New Guinea - two of the larger island nations - are likely to be logged out by 2020. Many Pacific Islands also have substantial mineral resources and potential oil resources, and PNG in particular is almost incalculably rich in gold, oil, and natural gas.

Underlying all the talk of humanitarianism and good neighbourliness is the need to control the markets and resources of the Pacific in the interests of Australian and NZ capitalism. This economic system moves through cycles of boom and slump. Since independence in the 1970s, Pacific states have staggered from financial crisis to crisis. Worse, Australian and NZ aid and IMF loans require Pacific states to implement neo-liberalism.

Like everywhere, neo-liberalism is a capitalist counter-attack against the record living standards working people won in the years after World War II. In the Pacific, this means crumbling social services and infrastructure. In the Solomon Islands, the state was cut to the bone and beyond. In 2000 it just collapsed and Australia and NZ used the RAMSI intervention to take direct control of policing, finance, and the justice system. A country that does not control those basic functions cannot properly be called independent.

The emergence of China as an economic superpower has also got our rulers worried. We don't believe for a moment that the Chinese ruling class will be anymore benevolent or honest

in their dealings with the Pacific than NZ is or the British Empire was. Capitalists obeys the same rules in every land - accumulate, accumulate, accumulate. The only check on this is the level of grassroots resistance.

Troops no solution to African tragedy

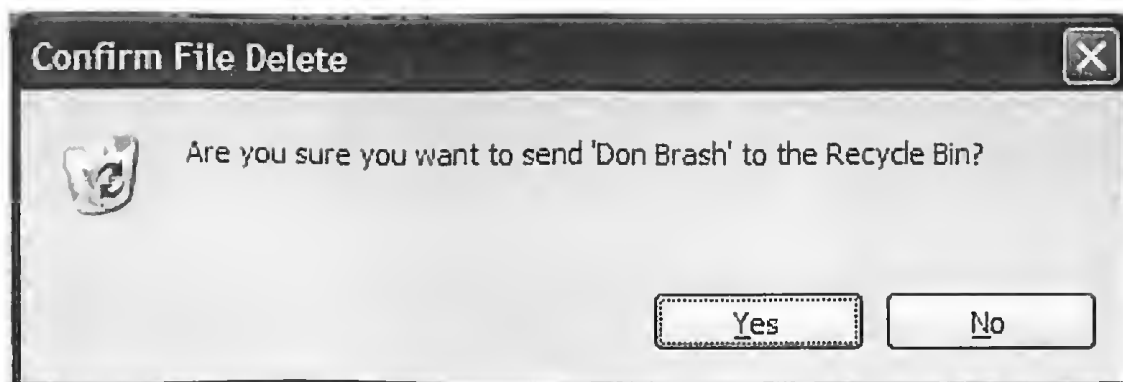
Despite this crude reality, every NZ military intervention wins support from liberals who still believe that it is the 'white man's burden' to police the Third World. In the US, a liberal-led 'anti-war' protest actually called for UN troops to be sent into Sudan. We look at the hidden agendas behind this call. As with its Australian and NZ deputies in the Pacific, economic weakness has forced the US to rely more and more on military force. In Iraq this has led to disaster. We also report on the US electoral backlash against this war.

Countdown strike

Exploitation is not only a feature of international trade and warfare. The Pacific not only provides raw materials and markets for NZ businesses - it also provides workers. Like Maori, Pasifika people are stuck in low-paying but essential jobs in New Zealand, like supermarket distribution workers. We report on the inspiring campaign by these workers to win better wages and conditions. In the end, it's only the working class - in New Zealand, Australia, the Pacific, and China - that has an interest, and the strength, to win a better world.

Good riddance to bad rubbish

We also celebrate the demise of National leader and prime slimeball 'Honest Don' Brash. His cynical deals with the Exclusive Brethren fundamentalists have exposed his vaunted honesty as a charade.



History catches up with the Tongan King

Tonga, once a sleepy island kingdom sunk in tradition and religion, was rocked by riots last month, as frustration with the royal government hit boiling point. Almost overnight, Australian and New Zealand troops appeared on the scene patrolling the scarred streets of the capital Nuku'alofa and controlling its airport.

!! Our presence is not about taking sides. New Zealand has been fully supportive of peaceful democratic reform in Tonga," said New Zealand foreign minister Winston Peters. But Tongan academic Dr Sitiveni Halapua said the word on the street in Nuku'alofa was that the foreign troops were there "to make people afraid and to support the government".

The monarchy has been the focus of increasing discontent in Tonga, which is still ruled by feudalism. Three quarters of the land is owned by the "nobility", and the prime minister, deputy prime minister are appointed by the king, as well as many judges and most cabinet ministers. Only nine of the 32 MPs are elected by "commoners".

Strikes by civil servants last year against low pay and the privatization of public services snowballed into a massive civil disobedience campaign against the decrepit 87-year-old king. When he died in September, royalist nobles fooled themselves into thinking that the public show of mourning (which was anyway compulsory) meant most Tongans didn't want change. Australian High Commissioner Colin Hill encouraged the new king, Oxford educated George Tupou V, to drag his feet over democratic reform. "Too rapid democratisation could lead to instability in Tonga, and I wonder



A gutted hotel: 80 per cent of the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa was destroyed in anti-royal riots.

whether the majority of Tongans really want rapid change anyway," Hill said. Prime Minister Fred Sevele, confidently said he was "99 per cent" sure the anti-

Privatisations and free-trade policies have impoverished ordinary Tongans, while the royal family has enriched itself massively.

monarchy unrest was a thing of the past.

But the slow-burning anger at the monarchy would not be defused by a change at the top. Privatisations and

free-trade policies have impoverished ordinary Tongans, while the royal family has enriched itself massively. The new king, George Tupou V, is a multimillionaire thanks to control of Tonga's electricity generation, its beer company, half its unexplored oil supply, one of its mobile phone companies, a cable television company and the rights to Tonga's internet domain name.

But the reckless greed of Tonga's aristocracy has not just angered ordinary Tongans. Local business owners, politicians, and professionals who have no problem with the monarchy's right-wing social and economic agenda believe that the looting of Tonga's wealth has been





The new king: George Tupou V dressed up for the 21st century

unfairly dominated by the feudal nobility. These elements have seized on the civil service workers' strike and popular anger at the king to push for a 'democratic' regime that they can dominate.

This conflict between urban business elites and the old nobility is nothing new – what's unusual about Tonga is that the monarchy has hung on so long, while kings and queens have been toppled all through the rest of the world. Feudalism is an economic system based on land ownership that has been steadily superseded by capitalism. This has often meant a violent, revolutionary struggle between the rising capitalist class and the old aristocracy. Always the struggle has been decided in the end in the favour of the business class, often with a guillotine.

Whenever monarchy has survived,

Whenever monarchy has survived, it's been on the sufferance of the new ruling class. Queen Elizabeth is as much a relic of feudalism as Tupou V – but Elizabeth is an employee of the British ruling class - the Tongan monarchy exists at the sufferance not of Tongan business owners, but of a foreign ruling class – first British, and now Australian and New Zealand.

it's been on the sufferance of the new ruling class. Queen Elizabeth is as much a relic of feudalism as Tupou V – with the difference that Elizabeth is an employee of the British ruling class, while the Tongan monarchy has existed at the sufferance not of Tongan business owners, but of a foreign ruling class – first British, and now Australian and New Zealand.

Now that the monarchy can no longer ensure political stability it is no surprise that Australian and New Zealand government support is evaporating – both they and the Tongan urban elite that leads the pro-democracy movement know that a change in the regime would not change the economic dependency of Tonga on NZ. "We'll push for as much democracy as can be gained in Tonga," Clark declared recently. "Tonga has been a feudal monarchy, and there is no place for that in the 21st century."

Most likely a new "democratic" government would be even more dependent on foreign support; it would support free trade, open up more of the country to foreign corporations, and attack the wages and conditions of working people more vigorously. The 80 per cent wage rises the king was forced to give the civil servants would be the first to go, and the sale of land would likely force more people into wage slavery either in Tonga or overseas.



The old king: Tupou IV presided over a decrepit feudal system

The return of colonial government

New Zealand and Australia are far and away the biggest countries in the South Pacific. Therefore, our rulers say, we must take on a bigger burden of ensuring peace and stability in the region. The lightning deployment of New Zealand and Australian troops to Tonga is not colonial-style gunboat diplomacy, they argue, just being good neighbours.

Aussie and NZ soldiers and police are currently being neighbourly in Tonga, as well as the Solomon Islands and East Timor. Warships and troops are on standby in case of instability in Fiji as well. For almost a decade, Australian military analysts have warned of a worsening "arc of instability" stretching from Indonesia to Melanesia. These predictions are coming true as the cash-strapped Pacific states are starting to fall apart.

But this is not just charity work for insignificant little atolls. The 14 Pacific island countries (including Papua New Guinea) have almost double the population of New Zealand, a combined land mass of 530,000 square kilometres, and untold mineral wealth, plus fisheries and lumber. And neighbours share, of course. East Timor has given Australia far more oil rights than international law demands – no doubt in gratitude for the peace brought by Australian military occupation.

The pattern of economic domination is the same for all Pacific countries. Australia and NZ provide aid, but enjoy massive trading surpluses. NZ's trade surplus with Fiji, for example, is roughly forty times the \$6 million provided by NZ aid last year. These interventions are not done for charity.

But direct intervention smacks of colonialism. NZ and Australia were both originally settler colonies of

Britain, which for almost a century directly controlled Britain's Pacific colonies. With victories worldwide against racism and imperialism in the last century (both in the Third World and Australia and New Zealand) colonial rule became politically impossible and power was handed over to local elites in the 1970s.

But the 1970s were also the beginning of the end of the post-war economic boom, and these local elites have been forced to push down living standards, and slash jobs and spending – much like Rogernomics in 1980s New Zealand. As governments fail to deliver, people lose faith in them and stability breaks down. This has proved as true for the Solomons as it was for the old Yugoslav federation, and it will happen in New Guinea, Fiji, and no doubt, Samoa too.

This poses a dilemma for the Australian and NZ ruling class, who would rather not reimpose direct rule but are running out of allies on the ground. The Australian ruling class, which largely exterminated its indigenous population is more gung-ho than our rulers, who are well aware that colonialism overseas could spark a backlash from the large Maori and Pacific minority here.

Just as we oppose the US occupation of Iraq, we also oppose NZ and Australian occupations in "our

As governments fail to deliver, people lose faith in them and stability breaks down. This has proved as true for the Solomons as it was for the old Yugoslav federation, and it will happen in New Guinea, Fiji, and no doubt, Samoa too.

backyard". Fighting for equality here means supporting the fight for equality internationally as well. Colonialism in any form is a step backwards that will do immense harm. The best support working people here can give the Pacific is fighting racism, defending public health and education, and demanding open borders.



The Yellow Peril

In the Pacific, US allies like Australia and New Zealand are fearful that the US focus on Iraq may mean that China becomes the dominant power in the Pacific. The swift Australian and NZ reaction in Tonga was spurred on by fear that the burning of Chinese-owned businesses in the Tongan and Solomons riots could provide a pretext for more direct Chinese intervention.

Both liberals and conservatives in Australasia are frightened by China's increasing power. Emeritus Professor Ron Crocombe of the University of the South Pacific warned that it was only a matter of time before China got more involved in the Pacific. Crocombe told Pacnews there are a growing number of Chinese in key positions in the Pacific, making for a "very combustible mix". In Tonga, the Chinese had acquired more than 72 per cent of Tongan business in a decade. "It all happened that fast." Their numbers were not large, he said, but they were in key sectors, including business and other more sinister activities. "Organised crime is now a major problem in the South Pacific and Chinese are major players in it," he said.

Along with the rise in organized crime, anti-Australian feeling was

growing in the region, he said. In Fiji, officially there were only 4000 Chinese migrants in Fiji but Crocombe claimed the number was closer to 30,000. Chinese were also taking over small businesses in Vanuatu, he said.

Crocombe's anti-Chinese muttering is not fringe extremism. He is a consultant to the Pacific Island Forum. More significantly, New Zealand's foreign minister, Winston Peters, is most famous for "Asian invasion"

Neither Washington nor Beijing, nor Canberra or Wellington, are "benevolent" or "honest" in their intentions towards the Pacific.



**Winston Peters:
neither benevolent
nor honest**

ranting in the 1990s. True to form, Peters last month warned that in the Pacific any "vacuum will be quickly filled by nations less benevolent, less honest in their intentions." Peters is just being diplomatic of course. We know that's code for the Yellow Peril.

Behind this rivalry is the decline in US power and global economic performance. Since the end of the post-1945 boom in the early 1970s, economic recession has become the rule, and recoveries have become shorter and shallower.

The USA was the dominant power during the post-war boom, and has lost economic supremacy with the collapse of that boom. In the past, the US used a combination of force and trade to get its way. Now it is forced to rely more on force. The Afghan and Iraqi armies were easily destroyed, but the US has not got the wealth to rebuild and pacify the countries.

Neither Washington nor Beijing, nor Canberra or Wellington, are "benevolent" or "honest" in their intentions towards the Pacific. The national interests of all these governments is preserve economic exploitation at home and find new markets and raw materials overseas – as cheaply as possible.

By contrast, working people internationally have a great deal to gain from open and honest cooperation. In the end, that's all that will stop the "race to the bottom" of capitalist competition.



Anti-Chinese racism has long been used by Europeans in the Pacific

Protest calls for UN to invade Sudan

Thousands rallied on September 17 in a "Global Day for Darfur" to call attention to a catastrophe created by civil war in the western part of Sudan. But the demand of the rallies was not stepped-up aid; it was for 20,000 NATO/UN troops to occupy the region.



A resident of a refugee camp shows his UN ration card. More aid, not foreign troops are needed.

There is a crisis in Darfur - since 2003, more than 200,000 Darfuris have died and more than 2 million have fled as the government-backed "Janjaweed" militias try to put down a local rebellion with murder, rape and scorched-earth policies. But the UN is not a neutral force - when push comes to shove, the UN does the bidding of the world superpower - the US.

Supporters of intervention aren't calling for direct US intervention, but the US would provide logistics and support just as it does now for the 7,000 African Union (AU) troops who currently patrol the refugee camps. 10,000 UN troops are already in oil-rich southern Sudan. But Sudan's President Umar al-Bashir, heartened by high oil prices and military setbacks for the US in Iraq, has refused to approve the entry of UN troops for fear the intervention would destabilise his government. The recent record of US military interventions is not reassuring. The "famine relief" mission to Somalia in late 1992 - begun after the worst of that country's famine was over - ended with a retreat of the Marines and the UN, but not before 10,000 Somalis were killed or wounded. Throughout the 1990s, then-US president Bill Clinton blockaded Iraq at the cost of 1 million lives, by UN

estimates. Then, under President George W. Bush's invasion and occupation some 200,000 more have been killed. This past summer, the US helped Israel destroy Southern Lebanon at the cost of at least 1,000 lives while collaborating in a siege of the Gaza Strip. Many prominent politicians like Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who have no problem with the massive death tolls

caused by US or Israeli wars, are dead keen to send troops into Sudan.

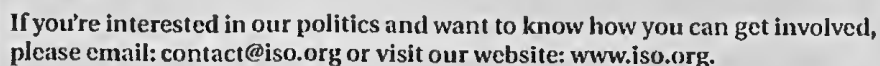
The idea that imperial forces can be made to do some good "just this one time" comes from a focus on isolated crises, without understanding the real aims of governments such as the US. Africa's untapped reserves of oil and other resources - controlled mostly by poverty-stricken, weak states - make it a target for escalating rival interventions in the near future. The major outside players are the US and China, which has become the world's second largest consumer of oil. China is using its loans and direct investment to woo African rulers. In some places, Chinese capital is pushing aside the US-led International Monetary Fund (IMF). Angola, for example, recently took a \$2 billion loan from China rather than submit to IMF conditions. In return, China won rights to Angolan offshore oil. China has invested US\$8 billion in Sudan's oil infrastructure since the US broke off relations with Sudan in the late 1990s. China now consumes 60 percent of Sudan's oil exports and sells the regime arms, including fighter aircraft.

But military connections are the US government's strong suit. In countries like Pakistan, Indonesia or Colombia, the US has ensured its long-term influence through intimate connections with the military. In Africa,



Nigerian troops from the African Union on patrol in Darfur.

Abridged from Socialist Worker (US)



Lessons of the Countdown Lockout

Recently, 600 National Distribution Union (NDU) members went on strike, demanding a collective contract across their various supermarket distribution centres. Their employer, the multinational 'Progressive Enterprises' responded by locking out the workers, hoping to starve out any sign of workers standing up for themselves.

With wide spread union and community support, the workers stood strong in their demands, and eventually Progressive agreed to concede to some of their demands. In the wake of the lockout settlement, Socialist Review takes a look at what happened, why it happened, the outcome, and the lessons we can take from the struggle.

Since the neo-liberal economic restructuring in New Zealand during the 1980's, together with the anti-union legislation, the Employment Contract Act (ERA) wage increases have not kept up with inflation, meaning that real wages have actually decreased. Meanwhile corporations and companies have been hauling in record profits. This trend of increasing inequality is nowhere more apparent than in the supermarket sector, where workers are notoriously underpaid, while the few corporate behemoths who own the vast majority of supermarkets continue to rake in record profits. For example, Roger Corbett, the CEO of Woolworths Australia, which owns Progressive Enterprises— a conglomerate that in turn owns Woolworths, Countdown and Foodtown earns \$AUD 8.5 million p.a.

Bosses get Richer

That's 340 times more than a full-time worker in one of his supermarket distribution centres, which means that he earns as much every day as a fulltime worker earns in a year.

In 2003, Progressive, then owned by Woolworths NZ, closed down distribution centres in Auckland and Christchurch, firing workers, and rehiring on lower pay rates, which signalled a end of the Woolworths national collective agreement that had been in place. Only workers at the Palmerston North distribution centre retained their pay and conditions, due to the militant unionism there. Since that time union members have been working to regain the lost pay and conditions, and the slow process of increasing their membership. The last few years have seen workers slowly gaining confidence and the early part of this year saw the NDU become strong

enough in its membership and leadership to launch a campaign to fight to regain the collective contract, and to fight for decent wages and conditions. Off the back of this campaign, and after a long and futile series of 'negotiations' with management, NDU called a 48-hour strike involving 600 of its members involved in the who work in four Progressive company owned Distribution Centres (DCs) in Auckland, Palmerston North and Christchurch to push for a collective contract among the centres, which was began at 4am on Friday August 25th. After the employer failed to negotiate, the union leadership voted to extend the strike until their demands were taken seriously.

The call for a strike extension was met with force by Progressive, who locked out all 600 striking workers, refusing to let them back until they dropped their demands, in a vicious attempt to starve them into submission. However, the workers stood strong in their demands, and with an outpouring of support from unions and the public, the overwhelming majority of workers stayed strong on the picket line. However as the lock out stretched into weeks, and then a month, resources were becoming stretched. Six weeks after the lock out started, Progressive offered to negotiate. Stretched beyond their means, and facing severe financial pressure, NDU conceded to a deal which promised to deliver significant pay increases across the board and effective pay parity, while foregoing a collective contract. A single national pay rate will deliver a 19.7% to the lowest paid distribution centre in Christchurch within two years. Also achieved are two wage increases to the base rate of 3.8% on 1 August 2007 and another 3.8% on 1 August 2008, with a one year increase of 4.25% this year for Palmerston North, 5 weeks annual leave for those with 10 years service and a \$1000 interest free loan for the returning workers.

This settlement results in three separate agreements rather than the single collective contract, but

nevertheless represents a significant victory for not just the supermarket workers, but workers in general. However, it shows real need to forge stronger unity between workers of different stripes.

Hard Labour

Labour claims to be the party for the working class. The working class certainly represents a majority of their vote, and the working class vote has been decisive in their election and re-election. But what have they actually done for the working and living standards of the average New Zealander? On that account the answer is clear. Under Labour, real wages have stagnated and even fallen, household debt has sky-rocketed, student debt has become institutionalised and workers' wages and conditions have been consistently undermined. Labour have consistently followed the trajectory of the openly pro-business neoliberal agenda that they instituted in 1984, that has since seen the wealth of the rich increased at a record rate, and the the wealth, living standards and working conditions of the majority of New Zealanders eroded in inverse proportion. Under Labour the gap between rich and poor in the last 20 years in New Zealand has increased faster than any other OECD country. Labour has helped to make New Zealand one of the worlds most friendly economies to do business in, while making it increasing difficult for the working class majority to get ahead, or indeed make ends meet.. Since Labour was reinstated in 1999, the wealth of the rich list has burgeoned by almost 9 billion, meaning a virtual doubling since '99. Meanwhile, the spoils of this economic boom has been conspicuously absent for the majority of New Zealanders, who have actually seen their working and living conditions progressively eroded away. This makes a sick joke of Labour's claims to be supporting and representing the majority of New Zealanders.

Their implementation of the Employment Relations Act (ERA) proved an enormous blow against the



Family values: supermarket workers defending their wages and conditions are fighting for themselves and their families; their victory is a victory for all working New Zealanders and future generations.

working class movement, outlawing, as it did, any rights to strike on political issues, in solidarity with other workers, in fact for any working class action at all outside a 40 day opening when new employment contracts are in negotiation. Even when workers conform to these laws, as they did in the case of the Countdown campaign, the state consistently uses their force in the form of police repression to try and shut down workers ability to fight, which we also saw in this campaign, with police ferrying scab labour in Palmerston north, and intimidating and arresting picketers and public supporters across the board on picket lines.

The Lesson

The lesson that we as members of the working class must take from this struggle is that real power lies outside of parliament, and even outside union bureaucracy. The working class, through their own self activity, are the only force that will consistently fight for their own interests and not capitulate to the demands of big business. Furthermore, we actually have the power to win decisive victories against the powers that are hell-bent on furthering the interests of New Zealand capitalism, while selling out the interests of the working class majority.

With an outpouring of support from unions and the public, the workers stood strong in their demands and on the picket line.

Because of this, a win for workers anywhere is a gain for workers everywhere, as it increases the confidence and consciousness of the working class movement in general, forges solidarity with the wider public, and thereby increases our ability to claw back wages, working conditions and living standards from the pockets of the capitalist elite. The campaign and victory came off the back of a significant win by the Nurses Union, with a successful claim of a 20% pay rise, as well as various other wins. The Countdown lockout, with the public support that it mobilised and the gains that it won, illustrates this clearly. Woolworths recently announced a 24.3% increase in its profit to \$AUD 1.01 billion, while Corbett oversaw the extensive dissemination of propaganda aimed at convincing supermarket customers that Progressive couldn't afford to raise the pitiful wages of their

workers, and that they were being held to ransom by the workers. This tactic of pinning the blame back on the working class rears its ugly head every time there's a crisis in capitalism. In fact it was used recently to denounce the radiographers strikes, with Medical Council chairman Prof John Campbell claiming that strikes were "an outmoded, dangerous and ineffectual way of to deal with complex industrial matters". The Countdown lockout showed that strikes and pickets are neither outmoded or ineffectual, although they most certainly are dangerous with respect to ruling class ideas and interests. It also showed that these "complex industrial matters" that working class people couldn't possibly understand, are actually extremely simple at their root: the needs of the capitalist system to constantly attack workers to fulfil its never ending pursuit of profit. Fortunately, in each fight, the needs of the working class become equally clear: the need for solidarity, generosity, vision and determination. It wasn't the union bureaucracy or the Labour government that won this battle, but the working class, through their own self-activity.

That's why we, as revolutionary socialists, look to the working class as the only viable force for change in society.

The end of the Republican era

In America on November 7, the dam finally burst. The creaking edifice of the Bush administration suffered a body blow in mid-term elections that were widely seen as a referendum on the Iraq war.

More than a decade of Republican domination of the US Congress was ended overnight. Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of the Iraq war, was sacked the following day. Democrats won control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Exit polls indicated that voters had come, overwhelmingly, to take a stand against Bush and the war. It didn't matter – as it did in the 2004 Presidential campaign – that the Democrats had no alternative to offer. According to New York Times exit polls, six in ten voters said their vote was based on national, not local, issues; the same percentage disapproved of the war in Iraq.

The Chicago Tribune summed it up: "Americans finally got to vote on the war. They want change. They got to vote on one-party rule. They rejected it. They got a chance to vote local. They voted national... Indeed, the Democrats essentially beat something with nothing. They offered no clear agenda, no Contract with America, not even a memorable bumper sticker. This was an election driven by feelings of rejection far more than embrace."

November 7 was a long time coming. Almost 3,000 US soldiers have now been killed in Iraq, to say nothing of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have died as a result of the occupation. Tens of thousands more troops have suffered hideous injuries which will leave them maimed for life.

There is a class dynamic to the rejection of Bush as well. While billions of dollars are squandered in Iraq, and Bush hands out massive tax cuts to the

rich who live in unprecedented luxury, life for most Americans has only got harder. According to exit polling by the Wall Street Journal the overwhelming majority of votes from the worse-off sections of the electorate went to the Democrats. In the minds of millions, racism and class inequality at home are intimately bound up with the war in Iraq – a war that the poor are forced to fight at the behest of a government that will not give them even the chance of a decent life.

The crisis in US imperialism

The vote against the war is mirrored by the crisis that is engulfing the US ruling class. This crisis flows from a simple fact: the war has been lost. The most powerful military power in history has been stopped by the heroic resistance of the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi resistance was born on a specific date: April 28 2003. That was the day that US soldiers, supposedly the liberators of Iraq, opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in the now famous town of Fallujah, killing 13 people. Such an atrocity would today raise little more than an eyebrow on the streets of Iraq. The horrors of Abu Ghraib, the firestorm that destroyed Fallujah in 2004, the innumerable dehumanising barbarities of life under occupation, all have bred a seething hatred that makes the first months after the invasion seem like a summer holiday.

Of course when the resistance first emerged, the now deposed Donald

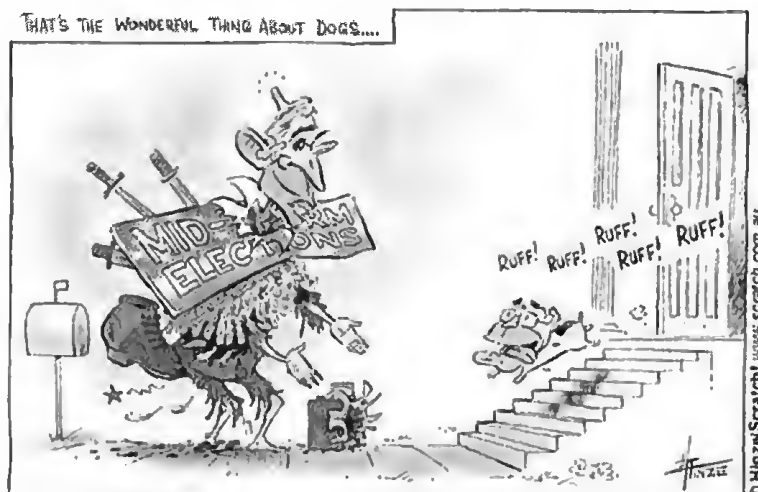
Rumsfeld refused to even admit that it existed. Publications like Socialist Review might have argued that a popular resistance movement was undoing Washington's imperial plans, but it was to take almost three years of bitter guerrilla warfare before the US establishment admitted what was obvious from the start.

But now the worm has decisively turned. At the end of October the New York Times ran a stark editorial, in which they wrote: "No matter what President Bush says, the question is not whether America can win in Iraq. The only question is whether the United States can extricate itself without leaving behind an unending civil war that will spread more chaos and suffering throughout the Middle East, while spawning terrorism across the globe."

Will they get out?

A clear majority of Americans – 61 per cent – want the troops out, but withdrawal will be difficult. Australian Prime Minister John Howard, in a rare display of honesty and insight, – got to the heart of the issue. If America leaves Iraq now, he said, it will be a "huge blow for US prestige, for US influence around the world".

For opponents of war this outcome would be welcome. US "prestige" underpins dictatorships around the world, fuels a new nuclear arms race, and is responsible for the hundreds of thousands of deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq. But for John Howard, defending US influence is the last reason to keep





George Bush: "Endless war" rhetoric not winning votes anymore

the war going in Iraq.

Because if you support US capitalism – and the Australian capitalist class is closely intertwined with its success – protecting US power is of the utmost importance. Already US failure in Iraq has emboldened its opponents around the world. Hezbollah's heroic stand against Israeli aggression; Hugo Chávez' defiance of George Bush at the UN; the broad leftist revival across Latin America; the increasing self-confidence of US rivals China and Russia – all of these things flow from the perception, and the reality, of a new US weakness.

If the US is decisively driven out of Iraq, the whole future of US imperial domination is called into question. The neo-conservatives who launched this war were not, from the perspective of US capitalism, insane. They recognised the urgent need to use the 9/11 attacks to reassert US military muscle.

The US ruling class is now thrashing around looking for a "new direction". It has no good options. One being considered is opening up negotiations with Iran and Syria in an attempt to stabilise Iraq, and organising a "redeployment" of US forces in Iraq – i.e. withdrawing to their mega-bases out of the cities, as well as in Kuwait and possibly Saudi Arabia. There is talk in some circles of dividing Iraq along ethnic and sectarian lines. Others are

calling for the resuscitation of the Baathists, and a reproachment with the Sunni wing of the resistance.

Even if the US is able to avoid complete disaster, none of these strategies have a hope of fundamentally turning the situation around. Indeed, we cannot rule out that this could be the beginning of an eventual withdrawal from Iraq. If so, it would be a monumental defeat for the US – and a victory for opponents of imperialism all around the globe.

But the US is not going to get out in the next 12 months. And even if they do eventually go, it will be because that is the best way of retaining whatever US power is possible in Iraq and the broader Middle East, and with a view to regrouping so the US can launch new wars. Understanding this is key to seeing the real role of the Democrats who now control the US Congress. They are, just as much as the Republicans, agents of US capitalism. Their hostility to Bush has nothing to do with concern for the Iraqi people. They would happily see another half a million Iraqis die if they thought it would advance the interests of the US ruling class. You only need to look at the Democrat record in Vietnam to prove that. The Democrats' only objection is that Bush is leading American capitalism to a cataclysmic defeat. Any alternatives they come up with – from increasing troop numbers

in Iraq, to bombing Iran, or even "redeploying" US troops – are aimed at maintaining US power.

We need to start from precisely the opposite premise. US imperialism is the single greatest threat to humanity today. The troops need to get out now, not to safeguard US prestige, but because they have no right to be there.

By Corey Oakley of Socialist Alternative, Australia (abridged)



When Washington was defeated

ELIZABETH SCHULTE looks at the lessons of Vietnam.

The U.S. government is the world's largest superpower, with unsurpassed wealth, power and military might. And as we saw in the war on Iraq, when Washington wants to decide the fate of a smaller, weaker nation, it will use every means at its disposal to get its way.

But it's important to remember that the U.S. doesn't always get its way. The U.S. government can be beaten--and has been. The U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War not only struck an immediate and devastating blow to American imperial arrogance, but it completely transformed the way that U.S. rulers looked at themselves and war for decades to come.

Although the U.S. had a hand in Vietnam for more than a decade--first, in aiding the French colonizers and then trying to install an anti-communist puppet government in the south--U.S. soldiers didn't officially intervene until 1965. The stakes for the U.S. were high.

First, Washington wanted to prove its

international superiority, especially over its main rival, the former USSR. And second, the U.S. was determined to demonstrate to the leaders and supporters of national liberation movements everywhere that it would tolerate no challenges. It failed at both.

Invasions and occupations always produce resistance--as the history of imperialism, from the British colonial adventures in the 19th century to the U.S. grab for control over Iraq today, shows.

In Vietnam, the guerrilla forces of the National Liberation Front (NLF) were far outmatched militarily by U.S. forces. But the NLF had mass support in the countryside and the experience of resistance against French colonizers in its favor.

So while U.S. warplanes carpet-bombed North Vietnam and U.S. soldiers were sent out to use the utmost brutality in peasant villages, the U.S. still could not win. This became clear for the world to see in 1968 with the Vietnamese rebels' Tet offensive.

Until this time, the U.S. had claimed that it was winning the war in Vietnam. But with NLF forces on the offensive in some 100 cities throughout South Vietnam, including the capital of Saigon, the Pentagon lie was exposed. The U.S. defeated the Tet offensive militarily, but it suffered a political setback that it never recovered from.

Other factors soon came into play. As the war dragged on, for example, U.S. troops became radicalized by the

experience. Despite their racist training to treat the Vietnamese people like animals, many soldiers grew to question what they were doing. The glaring class divisions within the military itself played a part--as working-class soldiers began ignoring the orders of their "superiors," and in some cases, physically retaliated against them.

Back home, antiwar protests that had been quite small in 1965, swelled to larger and larger numbers as the war progressed--especially as soldiers began returning home to tell what they had done. Questions about the war began to affect the public at large.

During the six weeks after Tet began at the end of January 1968, President Lyndon Johnson's approval rating dropped from 48 to 36 percent. Support for his handling of the war fell from 40 to 26 percent. Even the government's loyal media mouthpieces began to express the population's questioning of the war.

Life magazine--which had declared in 1965 that "the war is worth winning" and that victory was in sight--shifted to calling the conflict "harder, longer, more complicated" in 1967. Two years later, Life published in a single issue the portraits of some of the 250 soldiers who had died in a routine week in Vietnam--to draw attention to the fact that they weren't faceless soldiers, but someone's brother, husband and son.

The Johnson administration began to fall apart. "The pressure grew so intense that at times I felt that the government



The impact of the U.S. defeat was lasting. For decades to come, Washington avoided deploying large numbers of troops for any extended missions. U.S. invasions were later sold to the public as "humanitarian" campaigns--backed, wherever possible, by the "international community."

itself might come apart at the seams," wrote Clark Clifford, the defense secretary who replaced Robert McNamara in 1968. "Leadership was fraying at its very center...Everyone, both military and civilian, was profoundly affected by the Tet offensive, and there was, for a brief time, something approaching a sense of events spiraling out of control."

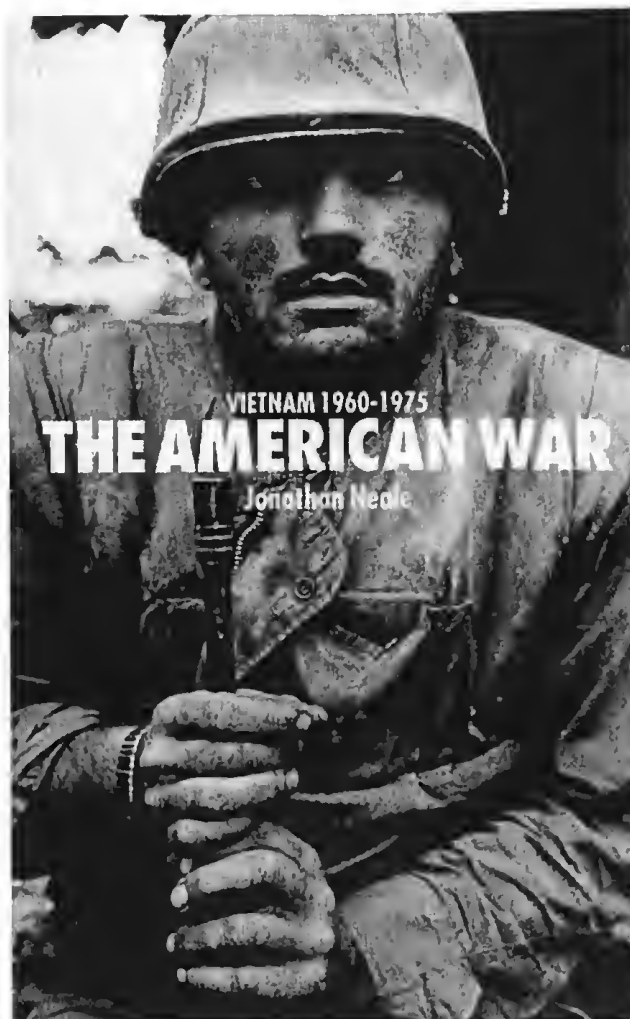
Johnson would decide not to run for re-election. The U.S. wasn't forced completely out of Vietnam until 1975. But in the meantime, Johnson's successor--Republican President Richard Nixon--resigned in disgrace amid the Watergate scandal.

The impact of the U.S. defeat was lasting. For decades to come, Washington avoided deploying large numbers of troops for any extended missions. U.S. invasions were later sold to the public as "humanitarian" campaigns--backed, wherever possible, by the "international community."

George Bush Jr.'s war on Iraq is an attempt to finish off the "Vietnam Syndrome" for good. Millions of people protested the invasion before it even began. But the fact that demonstrations in and of themselves didn't stop Bush's war doesn't diminish their importance.

Protest is one of several factors that lays the groundwork for beating U.S. imperialism--the resistance to the U.S. on the ground in Iraq being the central one. That's why the opposition we build here in the U.S. has to stand in solidarity with the people of Iraq who want to throw the U.S. out.

Socialist Worker (US)



Vietnam 1960-1975: THE AMERICAN WAR

By Jonathan Neale

Reviewed by Socialist Worker (UK)

The US dropped more bombs on Vietnam and its neighbours than all the bombs dropped by all sides during the Second World War. Two million Vietnamese were killed. Vietnam was drenched with poisons like Agent Orange - children are still born today with deformities caused by these chemicals. Land mines and cluster bombs dropped during the war continue to kill thousands. To make sense of the slaughter you could do no better than read "The American War: Vietnam 1960-75", by Jonathan Neale.

The beauty of book is that it that puts the American war in Vietnam into the wider power struggles of the time. Neale shows how the anti-Communist rhetoric of the US was part of their struggle for dominance of the world and of the US working class. Tens of thousands of socialists and trade unionists were driven out of their jobs in the anti-Communist witch-hunts of the 1950s. This book shows how the resistance of the Vietnamese linked with the anti-war movement in the US and in the army.

The anti-war movement started

before US Marines landed in Vietnam. Students were the backbone of the movement in the US, but opposition was strongest in the working class - not the middle-class. Long before TV began showing the reality of the war, conscripts returned from Vietnam to their working class friends and relatives saying, "The only people worth respecting there were the enemy".

Opposition to the war was strongest amongst those who knew someone who had fought in Vietnam. Hundreds of thousands refused the draft or deserted. Mass mutiny in the ranks began. More and more soldiers refused to accept genocidal and suicidal orders, and even "fragged" gung-ho officers and NCOs. The US ruling class was forced to withdraw its last troops from Vietnam in 1973. This book helps all those who want to oppose war and imperialism by recalling the heroism of anti-war protestors, US soldiers, and above all, the Vietnamese and showing how a mass anti-war movement can develop nowadays.

NZ\$30 from the International Socialists Organisation (ph 473 0502 or contact@iso.org.nz or PO Box 6157)

US seeks Shiite collaboration in attack on Moqtada al-Sadr

By James Cogan.

Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the main Shiite political rival of the anti-occupation cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, is in the US today for personal discussions with George Bush. Coming just days after the meeting between Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Hakim's visit is another sign of preparations for an armed confrontation with the Sadrist Mahdi Army militia in its Baghdad stronghold and an attempt by the US to refashion its puppet regime in Iraq.

Bush's central demand last week was that Maliki turn on the Sadrists—his principal ally within the Shiite coalition that dominates the Iraqi parliament. While there are tactical divisions in US ruling circles over Iraq policy, there is agreement among both Republicans and Democrats that Sadr and his movement have to be destroyed. Sadr's continuing insistence on a timetable for the withdrawal of all American troops and on Iraq's right to determine how its oil resources are exploited, combined with its maintenance of a militia believed to number between 40,000 and 60,000 men, is viewed as a significant and growing threat to the US strategic plan of indefinite domination over Iraq. Thousands of additional American troops are currently being

deployed to Baghdad to prepare for an operation against the Mahdi Army.

Aides to the Iraqi prime minister told Associated Press that Maliki once again balked at the US demands. He warned Bush that the Sadr's supporters would resist the entry of the US military into Sadr City and were bitterly opposed to disbanding their militia when Sunni Arab extremists were carrying out repeated atrocities against Shiite civilians. The fact Maliki met with Bush has outraged millions of Sadrist loyalists and forced al-Sadr—dubbed by Newsweek magazine as the "most dangerous man in Iraq"—to order his 30 loyalists in the parliament, including five cabinet ministers, to boycott the government until a US withdrawal timetable is announced.

It is under these conditions that Abdul Aziz al-Hakim has flown to Washington. Direct US talks with Hakim were among the recommendations made to Bush's cabinet in the November 8 memo authored by his national security advisor Stephen Hadley.

The memo proposed that the US ratchet up the pressure on Maliki to break his political alliance with Moqtada al-Sadr and sanction the destruction of the Mahdi Army militia. It warned, however, that "pushing Maliki to take these steps without augmenting his capabilities could force him to failure" as it would immediately

pose the prospect of rebellions by Sadrist supporters in the Iraqi police and army and "major Shia disturbances in southern Iraq". The US, Hadley declared, would need to help Maliki "form a new political base among moderate politicians from Sunni, Shia, Kurdish and other communities".

In plain English, Hadley proposed a complete refashioning of the puppet regime. A confrontation with the Sadrists is looming and threatening a collapse of the current Shiite-dominated Iraqi government. A new regime—headed by Maliki if he goes along with a bloody escalation of violence, or someone else if he does not—will need to put together from whatever factions within the parliament are prepared to go along with the US agenda. For that reason, the leader of the "moderate" Sunni party in the parliament, Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, has been invited for talks in Washington in January.

As the "moderate" Shiite faction, the Bush administration is looking to SCIRI to line up against the Sadrists. Since 2003, SCIRI has been among the most venal supporters of the US invasion, in order to secure power and privilege for the Shiite clerical and propertied elite it represents.

SCIRI has a proven record of collaborating with the US occupation against the Sadrists, who are its chief rival for influence among the Shiite population. In April 2004, when Moqtada al-Sadr issued a call to arms against the occupation, SCIRI opposed the uprising and used its influence to isolate the militant layers who fought the US military. SCIRI ministers took part in the cabinet of interim prime minister Iyad Allawi, which sanctioned the brutal American assaults on Karbala and Najaf during which hundreds of Shiite fighters were slaughtered.

Hakim—the son of Muhsin al-Tabataba'i al-Hakim, the highest ranking Shiite cleric until his death in 1970—was also central in ensuring the current head cleric in Iraq, Ali al-Sistani, refused to give any support or sympathy toward the Sadrist rebellion. His influence among the established Shiite clergy is far greater than that of Sadr, who has no theological credentials and is viewed as an upstart and a potential threat by many clerics. While the Sadrists have established



Mahdi Army militant fighting US troops in Baghdad in February

dominant position in Baghdad's working class Shiite suburbs such as Sadr City, most of southern Iraq remains under the control of SCIRI or Maliki's Da'awa Party.

SCIRI's own militia, the Iranian-trained Badr Brigade, effectively dissolved itself into the US-created army and police during the first year of the occupation. SCIRI-controlled units, along with ones made up largely of Kurdish peshmerga militia, have been among the few that have been of any serious assistance to the American military. The interior ministry police commandos, in particular, are alleged to be full of Badr militiamen and are blamed for the death squad operations against sympathisers of the Sunni-based insurgency. In the event of an operation to "disarm" the Mahdi Army, the US military will no doubt seek to use them against Sadr's militia.

Maliki's aides told Associated Press that Hakim would give assurances to Bush today that he would not allow the Iranian regime to "use him to promote its own interests" in Iraq. At the same time he would offer himself as a conduit for talks with Tehran over Iraq. SCIRI's main role would be to insist that Iran do as it did in 2004 and not provide any direct or indirect assistance to the Sadrists in the midst of a US crackdown.

What SCIRI and others who go along with the US agenda will gain was broadly hinted at in the memo on Iraq options rushed off by outgoing Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld on November 6. Rumsfeld proposed that the US "provide money to key political and religious leaders (as Saddam Hussein did) to get them to help us get through this difficult period".

The sordid diplomacy in Washington underscores the mafia-like character of the Bush administration and cynical nature of its claims that the US invasion has produced "democracy" in Iraq. There is barely even the pretence that Iraq's parliament makes decisions about the country's future. Figures like Maliki are viewed as puppets to be bullied into compliance as the American ruling elite desperately seeks to overcome the debacle in Iraq and shore up US interests.

Reprinted from the World Socialist Web Site, www.wsws.org, 4 December 2006



Fighter loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr in Najaf in 2004 anti-US insurgency

Anti-war protests in Dunedin

A 350-strong crowd, including many local Lebanese, protested against Israeli aggression against Lebanon in Dunedin last month. Richard Joseph, president of the Dunedin Lebanese community, thanked demonstrators for their support during a traumatic time, and told them that while some people had advised him to stay silent he believed that protesting could make a difference. Mohammed Bashir, also thanked New Zealanders for their concern on behalf of the Muslim community. Dr Brian Roper, from the University of Otago, outlined the role that Israel plays in the Middle East as attack dog for the US and called for a democratic, secular state in Palestine/Israel with equal rights for Jews and Arabs. Local schoolteacher Simon Edinonds said that the only force in Lebanon resisting Israel was Hezbollah, and called for people to support their struggle. The

demonstration was sombre at first, not surprising given the scale of the tragedy, but the feeling of powerlessness in the face of militarism gave way to a positive mood. One member of the Greens spoke in the Octagon, but the demonstration was organised by the small International Socialists Organisation. Andrew Tait, a member of the ISO, condemned the pathetic response of the Labour Government, and said the Labour Party's war on workers in the 1980s had smashed the party's own activist membership. The war in Lebanon was just one part of the US aggression in the Middle East, and an anti-war movement to rival the anti-Vietnam movement had to be built, he said. The march was followed two weeks later by a picket outside the Dunedin North Labour Party offices.

Pandemic on the rise again Aids, science, and morality

The HIV/Aids pandemic is on the rise again, as is fundamentalist control of the US government family planning programs. You do the maths.

3.9.5 million people are now living with HIV, according to the annual UNAIDS report, released ahead of World Aids Day on 1 December. 4.3 million people were infected in 2006 - 400,000 more than were infected in 2004. The daily rate of new infections stands at 11,000 and the report notes a disturbing rise in the number of female victims. The sharpest increases were in the former Soviet bloc, where the virus is mainly transmitted through intravenous drug use, and south Asia and south-east Asia, where prostitution is the main vector. Drug users, male homosexuals, prostitutes of both sexes and their clients remain most at risk. One positive note was the increased use of anti-retroviral medicine and declines in Kenya, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. But sub-Saharan Africa still bears the brunt of the epidemic, accounting for almost two-thirds of all people infected with HIV and 72% of global AIDS deaths. 24.7 million Africans are living with HIV/AIDS and 59% of them are women. By June 2006, around one million people on the continent were receiving antiretroviral drugs, a tenfold increase since December 2003. But "the sheer scale of need in this region means that a little less than one quarter of the estimated 4.6 million people in need of antiretroviral therapy in this region are receiving it," UNAIDS says.

Anti-aids campaigns falter

Gains made by anti-Aids campaigns in developed countries have also not continued, the report says. In the US, where African-Americans and Hispanics are most at risk, rates are stable but not declining. In the UK, there has been a steady rise. The UN report is especially worried by rising infections in countries where the disease was on the wane. The worst example of this is Uganda, previously a model country, which had held Aids in check with a combination of campaigning, education and widespread condom use. In Uganda, infection rates have grown from 5.6% among men and 6.9% among women in 2000 to 6.5% in men and 8.8% in women in 2004. The reasons for the increase are not clear, but according to the Guardian

newspaper, HIV rates fell sharply in the 1990s as President Yoweri Museveni backed the education campaign and condom use. More recently though, there has been less focus on condom use and more on sexual abstinence until marriage - in line with the thinking of the US government, which is spending millions of dollars on HIV prevention and treatment. Critics say that women are not always in a position to abstain from sex and that within marriage, many wives are infected by their husbands.

Fundamentalism on the rise

But the UN report pulls its punches. The recent increases in Aids have followed a clear shift from a medical to moral approach in the Bush administration. Even the Economist magazine, usually a rabid supporter of Bush, put two and two together and criticised the report for not making this link clearer. The Catholic bishops in Africa predictably enough responded to the report with a call for a return to "strong moral values" in Africa. This approach is only a stone's throw from the KKK-type bigots who believe Aids is a gift from god to purge the world of fornicators, gays, druggies - and Africans. This disease is a public health issue that can be stemmed and reversed by medical advances and more accessible information. But the increasingly unpopular Bush administration - and US capitalism - desperately needs the support of the Christian right-wing, no matter how sexist, racist, or unscientific their ideas are. The lunacy of the "Intelligent

Design" debate in the US shows that the American ruling class is willing to sacrifice public education - vital for maintaining a skilled working-class - in order to keep fundamentalist support. The same is true for public health. In early December, yet another fundamentalist will take over a top post in the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Eric Keroack, currently the medical director of a Christian pregnancy counseling agency "Woman's Concern", has been appointed deputy assistant secretary for population affairs in two weeks, where he will have considerable authority over both the Office of Family Planning and the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, socialist website www.wsws.org reported last month. Woman's Concern, the Massachusetts-based family planning agency Keroack currently directs, opposes contraception on moral grounds and does not distribute contraceptives or educational materials or provide access to contraceptives or education about protecting against sexually transmitted diseases, the organization promotes abstinence, or "sexual purity and self-mastery". Such agencies now outnumber abortion providers in the US. Most of the more than 2,000 anti-abortion "crisis counselling" facilities opened in the past few years have used federal funds earmarked for providing access to contraceptives.

(World Socialist Web Site, New Scientist, Guardian)



Profiting from global warming

The neoliberals who insist everything can be reduced to and solved by markets are drooling with excitement. They point out that the carbon trading market could be worth \$1 trillion in five years. In other words, carbon emissions, which we're told threaten the very existence of life on this planet, will simply be a commodity for gambling on the markets. Of course, it's all in a good cause – making investment in alternative energy technologies more profitable. Oh, sorry, to save the earth.

The shift in ruling class opinion has virtually nothing to do with a commitment to saving the environment. Governments and capitalists worldwide have seized on the opportunity to legitimise another way of taxing the poor to enrich the already wealthy – user pays and “green” taxes.

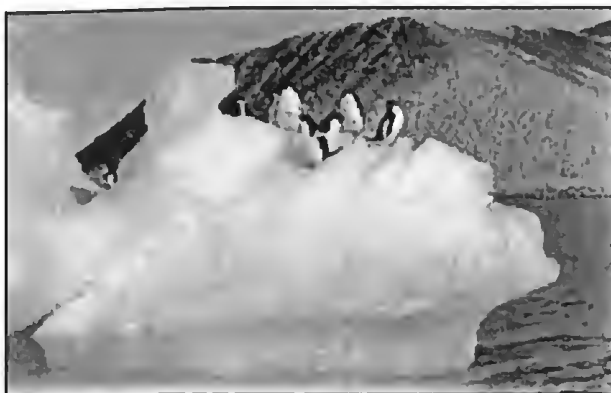
For three decades, since the end of the post-war boom, the capitalist class – a tiny minority of parasites who live by making profits from the labour of the great majority – have been battling to slash the living standards of the majority so they can maintain their profits.

Global warming, they hope, will become the latest pretext to convince us that user pays is socially responsible, that forking out precious dollars for more expensive services such as transport, electricity, and water is for the good of humanity. And, shamefully, they have ardent allies among many environmental activists.

The capitalist exploiters and their governments bank on the decency, the sense of humanity and collective responsibility which distinguishes the mass of people from themselves. A survey in Australia a few days after the Stern Review hit the news found that 63 per cent said they were willing to pay more for goods and services in order to help reverse global warming.

Green taxes, or rorts for the rich?

The capitalists, with their exploitative attitude to everything from the environment to human beings, have created the threat of climate change, so they should now pay to clean it up. Why should they be allowed to just move on and make profits out of investing in that clean-up while the rest



Antarctic ice shelves are collapsing as global temperatures rise. Scientists believe the North Pole will no longer exist in 50 years.

of us pay? It's clear this is what's planned.

The New Zealand government is set to impose a carbon tax that will add hundreds of dollars per year to the energy bills of working-class families. The \$360 million it raises annually will fund tax cuts – which benefit the wealthy. New Zealand's biggest polluters – the aluminium, power and agricultural industries – will be exempt from this tax. In other words, this so-called “green tax” is nothing more than capitalism robbing the poor to give to the rich.

In the UK, the Blair government is considering a series of carbon, road and fuel taxes that could cost a suburban family of four as much as \$3000 per year. That's a pittance for the wealthy, who can afford to drive around in their four-wheel drives, but it's a crippling burden for the working poor.

Energy companies aggressively market “green” energy, for which we, the household consumers, have to pay extra to do our bit. At the same time the aluminium industry, one of the biggest greenhouse gas polluters, rakes in something like \$400 million in subsidies in the form of cheaper power!

An Australia Institute paper in 2002 concluded that the subsidies on electricity to the aluminium industry could have been used to pay every worker in the industry \$40,000 a year. Any talk of charging households more for energy is an absolute rort while one of the most polluting industries could be closed down and the subsidies used to pay workers to stay home and grow trees!

Talk of charging more for water –

which we're told will be increasingly in short supply as drought becomes normal with climate change – is just as unfair. Even Melbourne's respectable daily The Age was sufficiently outraged to editorialise against a commercial deal done to bottle water from a Victorian aquifer. Pure water will be sold to a corporation with links to Coca Cola-Amatil, for bottling. They will pay a mere \$2.40 for a million litres! Melburnians pay \$960 for that much tap water, and farmers \$45 for irrigation water.

New Sydney Water data shows that annual average household water use has fallen 7 per cent to 237,000 litres a year since 2003-04 when restrictions began. But the wealthy residents of exclusive Woollahra have topped the list of water guzzlers for the third consecutive year, with 328,000 litres. Why? Because they were able to afford the highest number of fines for



breaching the restrictions.

Rather than demanding "green" taxes and inequitable penalties, environmentalists should be demanding the renationalisation of all utilities, the end of subsidies that have sustained pollution for decades, and the allocation of resources like water on the basis of need, with charges on those who profit from them, not those who can least afford to pay.

What will it cost to tackle global warming?

The Stern Review estimates that about 1 per cent of world GDP would be enough to reverse the production of greenhouse gas emissions and stabilise them at a sustainable level by 2050. Now, you might want to challenge his goals as too conservative, but let's look at his figures as a baseline.

We're told that this turnaround can only be achieved by getting capitalists to invest in new technologies – by guaranteeing them more profits than if they continue building carbon-based enterprises. That's how capitalism works: investment for profit, not for human need.

A sane society would simply start working out how to reallocate resources. But even in this lunatic society, the 1 per cent of GDP, about \$450 billion, is not much more than the \$350 billion already spent on the Iraq war by the US alone. The worldwide cost of the war now exceeds \$500 billion.

There is no shortage of money that could be put towards reversing global warming. It's not just being wasted on war. The Stern Review calculates that governments at present subsidise

polluting energy sources to the tune of \$250 billion a year.

Capitalism and the environment

Capitalist market mechanisms probably can force a redirection of investment and resources if growing numbers of capitalists see that as their future. But how environmentalists and those struggling for a better world respond can determine whether the changes just strengthen the capitalists and impose a heavy price on us, or whether we build a movement that can fight for social justice.

There is a tendency in much environmental writing to accept that saving the planet is so urgent that there is no alternative to paying more for water, power and transport, driving our cars less, and higher taxes all round.

The problem is, the vast majority have little choice. According to The Age fewer than 3 per cent of workers in Melbourne can get to work with less than 40 minutes driving in their car. Some drive as much as the equivalent of a working day every week to commute from the cheaper outer suburbs to jobs in the swish central business area where they can't afford to live. Increased fuel taxes, which Bob Brown and the Greens call for, hit those workers, but offer no genuine solution. Only massive extensions to public transport networks powered by green energy, plus affordable housing near where people work, can do that.

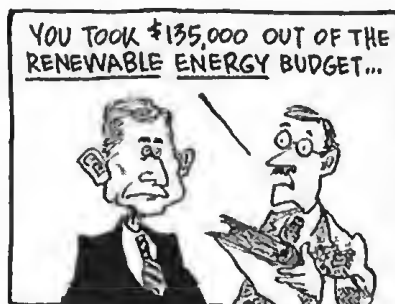
Apart from climate change, there are other massive environmental and social problems caused by capitalism. War is integral to capitalist competition. And with the US threatening to unleash nuclear bombs

on Iran, we could suffer far worse catastrophes before the predicted devastation kicks in. If we are to build effective resistance to all of these problems, the rights, the confidence and well-being of the mass of workers, students and the poor are paramount. So how we campaign on the issue of global warming has wider implications.

If predictions are correct, inundation of low-lying coastal areas could create millions of refugees in the next few years. Levees could avert disasters like Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, but they're not even planned. Movements which are tied to the interests of their own ruling class will not be politically oriented to the internationalism necessary to fight for open borders so the displaced are not left in destitution. We've seen the divisive effect of nationalist racism time and again in Australia.

Many workers are struggling to maintain a living wage. When they hear environmentalists calling for "green" taxes for essentials such as power, fuel and water, they will very likely conclude that their interests, i.e. the ability to live some kind of decent life, are counterposed to the fight for the environment. Worse, if they are convinced by these reactionary arguments, they will accept the classless idea that we all have to pull together, that they should abandon their own class identity for the greater good. This means only one thing: the capitalists will be that much stronger in their ongoing class war to reduce the living standards of the great majority. And every victory they have strengthens not just their investment portfolios, but also their dominance over society, making it that much more difficult to defeat them on any issue.

It means masses of people will be misdirected in what is needed to bring about the kind of changes which could guarantee an end to environmental destruction: the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a decent society based on human need instead of the profit motive. Typical. Capitalists around the world are falling over themselves to jump on the bandwagon of "tackling global warming" because the former chief economist for the World Bank, Sir Nicholas Stern, has released a report. He did not advance any new scientific knowledge. What was new, and convincing for the world's capitalists, was that "mitigation [of global warming] is a highly productive investment".



Workers Charter Conference

In 2005 a group of trade unionists, social justice activists and socialists linked together to set up a Workers Charter Movement as a way of promoting a social justice agenda. This October, the Workers Charter movement held their second annual conference. Our correspondent in Auckland was there.

The Workers Charter is a draft list of 10 demands aimed at guaranteeing workers' rights. Its demands cover rights such as a living wage, affordable housing and the right to strike. It has been endorsed by a wide range of unions, socialist and activist groups and individuals in New Zealand over the past year. In addition to promoting the Charter a monthly newspaper was published and so far nine copies have been produced.

The conference, which was attended by around 70 activists, titled "Unions for the 21st century", had two aims. The first was to discuss the first year of the Charter and set its direction for the coming year. The second was to provide a platform for a number of leading New Zealand unionists and others on the possible options for unions in New Zealand in the near future.

The first section of the conference was devoted to a review of what the Workers Charter Movement had achieved in its first year and the discussion was opened by long time activist John Minto. Minto suggested that the movement had fulfilled one of its aims – that of establishing a regular newspaper but had not met the second – that of establishing a movement based around it. He suggested that the Workers Charter would only become a movement when the people involved made it first priority after work and family. This point was largely missed in the discussion that followed which focused upon ways to ensure the newspaper was put on a sound financial footing and how to increase the subscription base.

It was unfortunate that this issue did not get further discussion because it points to an important issue for left activists who are members of one organisation but involved in other groups and causes. For inevitably, in these situations, it is the priorities of the original organisation in which a person is a member which take precedence in most cases. Thus in the case of the Workers Charter, many of the key figures involved in its development are already involved heavily in other organisations - which limits the time and energy and



NDU chief: Laila Harre

resources they have to build a Workers Charter movement.

The second section of the conference featured a discussion on 'Unions in the 21st century' and the speakers were Andrew Little, National Secretary of the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union, Laila Harre, National secretary of the National Distribution Union, Sue Bradford, the green MP, Mengzhu and Eliana Darroch, representing Radical Youth, and Joe Carolan, a union organiser and member of the Auckland-based Socialist Workers Organisation.

Little talked about his union's commitment to the Fair Share campaign, launched in 2005 to fight for a minimum 5% wage increase per year to allow workers' wages to take a share of the growth in the economy. He noted that many firms were becoming much more aggressive in their tactics -

something unions would need to take into account when organizing.

Laila Harre discussed the recent struggle between her union members and Progressive Enterprises. She made some interesting points, most particularly suggesting that unions could win disputes, even where union density was not high, provided they involved their wider communities in the industrial action. She stressed the importance of the wide ranging public support for the Progressive strike, which enabled union members to stay on strike to push their demands.

Mengzhu and Eliana Darroch, representing Radical Youth, which organised a thousand-strong high school student walkout in Auckland against youth wages, spoke about the group's plans for the coming year and the need for wider involvement from the union movement. Joe Carolan argued for the importance of building on the successes of the recent "Supersizemypay.com" campaign conducted by fast-food workers. He also discussed the work of the Solidarity union in South Auckland, noting that in some cases many workers had not seen a union for many years.

The conference also discussed a proposal to launch a campaign around three specific demands – a minimum wage of NZ\$15 per hour, the scrapping of youth wages and the legal right to strike on any issue.

Socialist Review Says:

"The Workers Charter is an attempt to provide news that reflects the needs and interests of the working class majority of New Zealand instead of the corporate media. This is sorely needed, as the ongoing Otago Daily Times campaign against hospital workers' right to strike shows. It aims to provide news and views from and about workers organizing and fighting back, and in the long run to build an broad left alternative to the Labour Party.

"It will be great if a nationwide workers paper can take off, but the

financial, reporting and distribution difficulties are serious. Because we want it to succeed, the ISO distribute the newspaper in Dunedin; but we believe that for a left-wing newspaper to survive in a hostile climate it's necessary to first build a nationwide organization that can support the paper. So we encourage people to subscribe to Workers Charter (either directly from Auckland or else by contacting us), but to get involved in building the International Socialists Organisation and improving our magazine."

Rebel in the ranks

Matt McCarten's story, as told to Cathy Casey

Random House New Zealand

\$29.95

He's tough, he's pragmatic, he's successful – and he's left-wing. Matt McCarten is an interesting character with an interesting story to tell. A fascinating, even inspiring, insight into how Matt survived an extremely tough childhood to become a fighter for workers' rights gives way to an account of bureaucratic machinations within the doomed Labour left, and its successor, the Alliance Party. Needless to say, the first half is more engaging. The book ends with the collapse of the Alliance, but that is far from the end of his story.

At present, McCarten is the head of the militant UNITE trade union, which has organised thousands of fast food workers and won real gains for its members. The successes of UNITE stand out as proof that unions, which have been in retreat for over 20 years, can rebuild through old-school organising and industrial action instead of just wheeling and dealing inside Labour or parliament.

McCarten is staunchly left wing (he prefers the term pro-worker) in a country where all major parties accept free-market economics and social inequality as either desirable (National) or inevitable (Labour and the Greens). Nonetheless, he commands a lot of respect from all sides of politics as a shrewd operator and campaigner.

This hard-earned reputation makes McCarten one of the few really intriguing political figures of the last couple of decades. While many of his former trade-union mates, like Labour MP Taito Philip Field, have sold out their principles for a cushy job and personal enrichment, McCarten has kept swimming against the political tide.

Why?

My guess is that in his case the cliché that "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" may be true. McCarten spent his childhood in orphanages – first with the Sisters of Compassion, who, he says, lived up to their name, and secondly with the Brethren, whose approach to child-raising was brutal. Work, simple food, severe beatings, and more work made up his days. McCarten escaped from this regimentation to his mother's disorganised house in

Dunedin. In this chaos, learning self-discipline was essential to survival.

Unfortunately, this childhood is not as unusual as it should be. But where in most cases lasting damage results, in Matt's case it seems to have fostered a straightforward, unromantic desire for justice and the mental toughness and tenacity to fight for it.

McCarten is one of the few trade unionists to have seen the need for a political break from the Labour Party. But it's not clear from this book what political alternative he has to offer. There's one telling episode from the fight he waged against Richard Prebble for control of Auckland Central, in the days when both men were still in the Labour Party.

"I once said to Prebble, 'We're here to support you, Richard.' He scowled and said, 'Yeah, like a hangman with a rope.'"

The line about the hangman is a paraphrase from the Russian socialist V.I. Lenin. The irony is that the Prebble, the tool of the Business Roundtable, was aware of it and the left winger was not. One can't help wonder whether a lot of time could have been saved if

McCarten had read more Lenin. When Lenin's lifelong work was building a political party that represented the undiluted interests of working people, McCarten spent the next decade trying to cobble together alliances with a ragtag group of liberals, disgruntled small businessmen, and greenies.

To defeat Prebble, he made an alliance within Auckland Central Labour Party with middle-class liberals like Bruce Hucker, currently the power behind the throne in the Auckland City Council. As McCarten says, "I was the organiser and Bruce played the front role." The Alliance followed the same pattern – left-wing, working-class activists did the hard graft to put right wingers like Frank Glover and incompetents like Alamein Kopu into Parliament.

In this book, Matt does not offer any suggestions for rebuilding a political vehicle for working New Zealanders, but his work in UNITE and the fresh impetus that gives to militant unionism is a powerful example.

Mike Tait



Working class fighter: the UNITE union Matt helped set up has won a path-breaking pay claim from fast-food giant McDonalds in December.

Gillo Pontecorvo 1919-2006: A Director committed to change

Gillo Pontecorvo, the Italian director of *The Battle of Algiers*, died in October. Despite the fact that his last film came out 27 years ago, the tributes paid have been enormous.

He was born into a wealthy textile family in Pisa and was destined to have a comfortable future until fascist dictator Benito Mussolini passed his "racial laws" in 1938. He banned Jews from many walks of public life. The Pontecorvos went into exile in Paris.

Gillo's life was disrupted again in 1940 when the Nazis invaded France. By now he had joined the Italian Communist Party. He decided to move back to Italy, which had been invaded and occupied by the Nazis. As a member of the resistance and a Jew he risked death.

Kapò (1960), his second film, was his big breakthrough in world cinema. Pontecorvo presented a harrowing account of life in a concentration camp, using the grainy black and white style he then used in his masterpiece, *The Battle of Algiers*. This is the story of the Algerians' struggle for independence against French colonialism.

The Battle of Algiers is a film at the top of many film critics' list of all-time greats. Pontecorvo never renounced the anti-imperialist politics at the core of the film.

But it isn't only the left that has been forced to react to the film's power. Three years ago a special screening was held for senior staff in George Bush's White House to help them understand the resistance in Iraq.

Pontecorvo told me, "I don't think they showed it because they thought the details were identical to Iraq, but because the overall atmosphere is very similar. Establishment figures will never like this film because it shows that when people unite they are strong."

His next film, *Queimada* (also known as *Burn!*), was another film about an anti-colonial struggle, this time dealing with a slave rebellion in the Caribbean in the early 1800s.

The emergence of the anti-capitalist movement saw Pontecorvo working with 32 other Italian directors to film the documentary *Another World is Possible*, which chronicled the protests against the G8 summit of 2001 in Genoa.



Revolutionary Classic: Pontecorvo's masterwork is an inside view of the Algerian uprising

He was often asked why he made so few films, and frequently responded, "Because I've said all I have to say."

In just *The Battle of Algiers* he said more than many prolific directors say in a lifetime. Incredibly, a film made 40 years ago is still essential viewing today, cinematically and politically.

Tom Behan

This is an edited version of an obituary published in the British paper *Socialist Worker*. The original can be found at www.socialistworker.co.uk

Red Words:

The Poverty of Philosophy

Immortal Technique

Lyrics from the album Revolutionary Vol.1. In fitting with a couple of his other tracks, I make no claim as to the political affiliation of the rapper - I don't know him and I don't know his beliefs. But the words stand on their own. If you're interested in listening to hip-hop or rap that's not sold-out like the shit you hear on MTV then check out Immortal Technique. If you're lucky enough to have a record store that sells it, then buy it and support the underground hip-hop scene, otherwise burn it off the net and help spread the word.

--Chris Baxter

Most of my Latino and black people who are struggling to get food, clothes and shelter in the hood are so concerned with that, that philosophising about freedom and socialist democracy is usually unfortunately beyond their rationale. They don't realize that America can't exist without separating them from their identity. Because if we had some sense of who we really are, there's no way in hell we'd allow this country to push it's genocidal consensus on our homelands. This ignorance exists, but it can be destroyed.

Niggas talk about change and working within the system to achieve that. The problem with always being a conformist is that when you try to change the system from within, it's not you who changes the system; it's the system that will eventually change you. There is usually nothing wrong with compromise in a situation, but compromising yourself in a situation is another story completely, and I have seen this happen long enough in the few years that I've been alive to know that it's a serious problem. Latino America is a huge colony of countries whose presidents are cowards in the face of economic imperialism. You see, third world countries are rich places, abundant in resources, and many of these countries have the capacity to feed their starving people and the children we always see digging for food in trash on commercials. But plutocracies, in other words a government run by the rich such as this one and traditionally oppressive European states, force the third world into buying overpriced, unnecessary goods while exporting huge portions of their natural resources.

I'm quite sure that people will look upon my attitude and sentiments and look for hypocrisy and hatred in my words. My revolution is born out of love for my people, not hatred for others.

You see, most of Latinos are here because of the great inflation that was caused by American companies in Latin America. Aside from that, many are seeking a life away from the puppet democracies that were funded by the United States; places like El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Columbia, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Republica Dominicana, and not just Spanish-speaking countries either, but Haiti and Jamaica as well.

As different as we have been taught to look at each other by colonial society, we are in the same struggle and until we realize that, we'll be fighting for scraps from the table of a system that has kept us subservient instead of being self-determined. And that's why we have no control over when the embargo will stop in Cuba, or when the bombs will stop dropping in Vieques.

But you see, here in America the attitude that is fed to us is that outside of America there live lesser people. "Fuck them, let them fend for themselves." No, Fuck you! They are you. No matter how much you want to dye your hair blonde and put fake eyes in, or follow an anorexic standard of beauty, or no matter how many diamonds you buy from people who exploit your own brutally to get them, no matter what kind of car you drive or what kind of fancy clothes you put on, you will never be them. They're always gonna look at you as nothing but a little monkey. I'd rather be proud of what I am, rather than desperately trying to be something I'm really not, just to fit in. And whether we want to accept it or not, that's what this culture or lack of culture is feeding us.

I want a better life for my family and for my children, but it doesn't have to be at the expense of millions of lives in my homeland. We're given the idea that if we didn't have these people to exploit then America wouldn't be rich enough to let us have these little petty material things in our lives and basic standards of living. No, that's wrong. It's the business giants and the government officials who make all the real money. We have whatever they kick down to us. My enemy is not the average white man, it's not the kid down the block or the kids I see on the street; my enemy is the white man I don't see: the people in the white house, the corporate monopoly owners, fake liberal politicians those are my enemies. The generals of the armies that are mostly conservatives those are the real mother-fuckers that I need to bring it to, not the poor, broke country-ass soldier that's too stupid to know shit about the way things are set up.



In fact, I have more in common with most working and middle-class white people than I do with most rich black and Latino people. As much as racism bleeds America, we need to understand that classism is the real issue. Many of us are in the same boat and it's sinking, while these bougie Mother-Fuckers ride on a luxury liner, and as long as we keep fighting over kicking people out of the little boat we're all in, we're gonna miss an opportunity to gain a better standard of living as a whole.

In other words, I don't want to escape the plantation I want to come back, free all my people, hang the mother-fucker that kept me there and burn the house to the god damn ground. I want to take over the encomienda and give it back to the people who work the land.

You cannot change the past but you can make the future, and anyone who tells you different is a fucking lethargic devil. I don't look at a few token Latinos and black people in the public eye as some type of achievement for my people as a whole. Most of those successful individuals are sell-outs and house Negroes.

But, I don't consider brothers a sell-out if they move out of the ghetto. Poverty has nothing to do with our people. It's not in our culture to be poor. That's only been the last 500 years of our history; look at the last 2000 years of our existence and what we brought to the world in terms of science, mathematics, agriculture and forms of government. You know the idea of a confederation of provinces where one federal government controls the states? The Europeans who came to this country stole that idea from the Iroquois lead. The idea of impeaching a ruler comes from an Aztec tradition. That's why Montezuma was stoned to death by his own people 'cause he represented the agenda of white Spaniards once he was captured, not the Aztec people who would become Mexicans.

So in conclusion, I'm not gonna vote for anybody just 'cause they black or Latino they have to truly represent the community and represent what's good for all of us proletariat.

Porque sino entonces te mando por el carajo cabron gusano hijo de puta, seramos libre pronto, viva la revolucion,

VIVA LA REVOLUCION!

Letters:

Dear Socialist Review,

Kia Ora!

Returning to Los Angeles after spending nearly a year in Dunedin has been a bit of a nasty shock. As a native of Los Angeles—a city with so much potential for positive influence and creative action—the biggest disappointment has been seeing the tragic population of homeless people. As I walked through a major business district this afternoon, I counted 8 homeless individuals on a single city block. Each was begging for food or money. Several appeared to be physically or mentally handicapped. One couldn't have been older than sixteen. It was incredible to me how 99% of the pedestrians on the street seemed to walk by without even acknowledging their existence. It was as if these homeless people were invisible at best, or afflicted with some terrible, contagious disease at worst.

Citizens of Los Angeles view homelessness as a "fact of life,"—just one of those things that can't be helped, like death or taxes or traffic on the 405 freeway. But with one of the highest homeless populations in the nation (over 91,000 in the greater Los Angeles area, according to a 2005 census) it is astounding to me that this issue can be continually ignored. Of course, under capitalism, it is indeed a daunting and perhaps insurmountable

issue. But it doesn't have to be this way! To quote Paul D'Amato's article, "What Will Socialism Look Like?" in the June 2005 issue of *The Socialist Worker*, "the solution to homelessness is simple—build homes for the homeless." Well, of course!

As someone who is quite new to socialist theory, sometimes the politics, history, and ideology confuse me. In the end, however, I usually wind up thinking, "it's so simple. We just need to treat each other like human beings—with dignity, respect, and care." For me, that is what socialism is about—a mechanism by which we can put into action the "gut feelings" we all have inside.

Maybe I'm making sweeping generalizations about attitudes towards homelessness in L.A. But as someone who has lived in the city for most of my life, and personally struggles every single day deciding how much and when and who to give money or food to, I ultimately feel frustrated and powerless. Giving a few bucks to someone who is severely handicapped, starving, or mentally ill is definitely better than nothing, but it isn't really going to make a huge impact in the long run. It's like putting a bandaid on a gangrenous wound. It's easier just to walk by and pretend not to see them. However, after spending time in New Zealand, a country with noticeably fewer homeless individuals than my native city, I can't ignore the issue any

more.

Being forced to confront homelessness during my return visit to Los Angeles has convinced me still further that the status quo is unacceptable, and that a revolution needs to occur to adequately address homelessness, and many other social issues.

Alex Franzen

Dear Socialist Review,

Many on the left hail Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez as a new left-wing leader for the world for his 'peoples' power' revolution and his stance against the advance of U.S. Imperialism in South America and the third world. Indeed Chavez has been forced to rely on 'his' people several times during his presidency and has attempted to implement policies of relief for Venezuela's poor to gain popular support. But events may yet show the folly of looking to reformists to lead a movement for revolutionary change. Recent weapons spending in Venezuela speaks volumes about Chavez's political direction, and the trajectory of reformism generally.

Recent weapons spending in Venezuela speaks volumes about Chavez's political direction

Earlier in the year Chavez spent \$3 billion (U.S.) of Venezuelan oil profits on purchasing new fighter jets and helicopters for the Venezuelan air force. Politically, this is qualitatively different from his previous strategy of relying on popular support. An air force requires extensive infrastructure and highly trained professional personell— the polar opposite of a peoples' militia. Rather than relying on the people to defend their country (and his government), Chavez is opting for a profession military loyal to him. It appears what Chavez fears is not an invasion from without, but a second coup, and does not want to be dependent on popular support. Such are the vacillations of reformism.

Cory Anderson



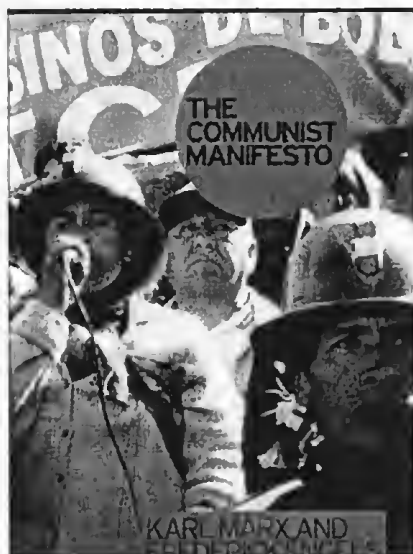
Further Reading

Workers' revolutions of the 20th century \$5

Of all the arguments that socialists make, the insistence on the need for revolution is perhaps the most controversial. Not, in many cases, because the idea of revolution seems bad, but mostly because it seems so unrealistic. And yet a brief look at the recent history of capitalism shows not only that revolutions happen, but that they keep happening again and again, sometimes despite seemingly overwhelming odds. This pamphlet documents just some of the working class revolutions of the last century: Russian in 1905 and 1917, 1918-1923, 1956, 1972-3, 1979 and 1980-1981. The accounts testify to the courage and creativity of working people when they organise and fight-back. But while this history shows that revolutionary outbreaks are inevitable, they also show that victory for the oppressed masses is far from certain. So in looking at this history, the authors have tried to draw lessons for the future.

WORKERS' REVOLUTIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE PAMPHLET



The Socialist Movement: our history \$6

The history of the socialist movement is rich with lessons for those wanting an alternative to the horrors of modern capitalism. This pamphlet introduces real story of our movement.

Reform or Revolution \$3

Rosa Luxemburg

Luxemburg wrote this essential pamphlet in opposition to the important theorist of reformist socialism, Eduard Bernstein, whose ideas became popular in the German Socialist Party around the turn of the 19th Century. In this pamphlet, Luxemburg points out that reformism is not just a different road to the same socialist end that revolutionaries espouse, but a road to a different destination altogether.

The Communist Manifesto \$6

Karl Marx & Frederick Engels

The introduction to Marxism by its founders. The Manifesto of the Communist Party was written just before the revolutions of 1848, as the public expression of the ideas of the German Communist League, of which Marx and Engels were leading members.

Essays on nationalism and revolution in the Arab world \$6

This essay looks at the politics of nationalism, socialism and Islamism in the Arab world, and examines the different strategies these currents present as a way forward for the Arab revolution.

Essays on
nationalism and
revolution in
the Arab world



Where We Stand

Socialism

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

Workers' Power

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power - a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

Revolution Not Reformism

Despite the claims of Labour, Alliance and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

Liberation From Oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Maori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

Tino Rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga. Maori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Maori. The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori. Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.





After years of falling real wages, supermarket distribution workers took industrial action earlier this year for a better deal. Supermarket multinational "Progressive" Enterprises seized the chance to lock the workers out, hoping to stamp out any sign of workers standing up for themselves. But the distribution workers stood firm, despite suffering serious hardship from lost wages, helped by an outpouring of public support and donations. Their win is a victory in the wider fight for a better deal for workers in New Zealand.



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